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Report of the Special Committee to investigate Israeli practices affecting the human rights of the Palestinian people and other Arabs of the occupied territories

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Report of the Secretary-General

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 63/95, the operative part of which reads as follows:

> "*The General Assembly*,
>
> "1. *Commends* the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories for its efforts in performing the tasks assigned to it by the General Assembly and for its impartiality;
>
> "2. *Reiterates its demand* that Israel, the occupying Power, cooperate, in accordance with its obligations as a State Member of the United Nations, with the Special Committee in implementing its mandate;
>
> "3. *Deplores* those policies and practices of Israel that violate the human rights of the Palestinian people and other Arabs of the occupied territories, as reflected in the report of the Special Committee covering the reporting period;
>
> "4. *Expresses grave concern* about the critical situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, since 28 September 2000, as a result of unlawful Israeli practices and measures, and especially condemns all illegal Israeli settlement activities and the construction of the wall, as well as the excessive and indiscriminate use of force against the civilian population, including extrajudicial executions;

* A/64/150.

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"5. *Requests* the Special Committee, pending complete termination of the Israeli occupation, to continue to investigate Israeli policies and practices in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and other Arab territories occupied by Israel since 1967, especially Israeli violations of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, and to consult, as appropriate, with the International Committee of the Red Cross according to its regulations in order to ensure that the welfare and human rights of the peoples of the occupied territories are safeguarded and to report to the Secretary-General as soon as possible and whenever the need arises thereafter;

"6. *Also requests* the Special Committee to submit regularly to the Secretary-General periodic reports on the current situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem;

"7. *Further requests* the Special Committee to continue to investigate the treatment of the thousands of prisoners and detainees in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and other Arab territories occupied by Israel since 1967;

"8. *Requests* the Secretary-General:

(*a*) To provide the Special Committee with all necessary facilities, including those required for its visits to the occupied territories, so that it may investigate Israeli policies and practices referred to in the present resolution;

(*b*) To continue to make available such staff as may be necessary to assist the Special Committee in the performance of its tasks;

(*c*) To circulate regularly to Member States the periodic reports mentioned in paragraph 6 above;

(*d*) To ensure the widest circulation of the reports of the Special Committee and of information regarding its activities and findings, by all means available, through the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat and, where necessary, to reprint those reports of the Special Committee that are no longer available;

(*e*) To report to the General Assembly at its sixty-third session on the tasks entrusted to him in the present resolution;

"9. *Decides* to include in the provisional agenda of its sixty-third session the item entitled "Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories."

2. The Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, in preparation for its field mission, addressed a letter dated 4 May 2009 to the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations Office at Geneva, requesting full access to the occupied territories in order to fulfil the responsibilities entrusted to it by the General Assembly in resolution 63/95. The Special Committee received no response from the Israeli authorities.

3. The Special Committee was supported by various United Nations agencies during the implementation of its mandate, specifically the Office of the United

Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the offices of the United Nations Resident Coordinators in Egypt, Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic in the organization of the mission and by offering in situ support.

4. The Special Committee carried out its field mission to Egypt, Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic from 3 to 13 August 2009. In the three countries, the Special Committee met with 33 witnesses, including representatives of Palestinian, Israeli and Syrian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from the occupied territories, Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic.

5. Pursuant to paragraph 8 (d) of resolution 63/95, the following activities were undertaken.

Department of Public Information

6. The Department of Public Information disseminated information on the work of the Special Committee during the period from August 2008 to July 2009, using various means at its disposal.

7. Through its range of news and media products, the Department ensured that information on the Special Committee's work and findings was made available to global audiences in the six official languages of the United Nations, either through direct distribution or through its broadcast partners.

8. United Nations Radio covered the activities of the Special Committee, including its visits to Egypt, Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic, and reported on the statements issued by the Committee following its mission to the Middle East.

9. On the Internet, the coverage by the United Nations News Centre, one of the most heavily visited pages on the Organization's website, continued to highlight a wide range of issues related to the situation in the Middle East and the human rights of the Palestinian people. Similarly, United Nations Television, including through its UNifeed and webcast operations, and United Nations Photo, focused on the subject, ensuring broad distribution of multimedia products to a global audience.

10. The Department also ensured that web pages on the question of Palestine were updated and maintained in the six official languages on the United Nations website (www.un.org) on its "Global Issues" page, with links to other related pages, including the database of the United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine (UNISPAL).

11. The 2006 issue of the *Yearbook of the United Nations*, which was released in 2009, covered the activities of the Special Committee in its chapter dedicated to the Middle East. During the reporting period, iSeek, the Secretariat's global internal communications platform, posted stories on the work and safety of staff of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

12. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library continued working in cooperation with the Division for Palestinian Rights to digitize older United Nations documents for posting on the Official Document System and on UNISPAL.

13. The report of the Special Committee was distributed to Government officials, media, NGOs and educational institutions by the network of United Nations information centres. The United Nations information centre in Cairo arranged a

press conference and television interviews for the members of the Committee. The United Nations Information Service at the United Nations Office at Geneva served as media liaison for the Human Rights Council, which tackled the question of human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territory during the period under review.

14. The Department organized a training programme for 10 young Palestinian journalists at the United Nations office in Washington, D.C. and the United Nations Office at Geneva from 27 October to 5 December 2008. The programme, which was aimed at print-media professionals, included important briefings on human rights, such as the work of OHCHR, the role of the Special Rapporteurs and coverage of the work of the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council relating to human rights issues of the Palestinians and other Arabs of the Occupied Territories. Preparations for the 2009 training programme, which is to take place from 2 November to 11 December 2009, are under way.

15. A booklet on "The Question of Palestine and the United Nations" (DPI/2499), which was issued in all six official languages in 2008, is available on the UNISPAL database on the United Nations website. It provides a historical narrative of the Palestinian people since the United Nations partition plan in 1947, including socio-economic conditions, humanitarian challenges, human rights issues and political developments.

16. During the reporting period, more than 300,000 visitors viewed the permanent exhibit, "The Question of Palestine and the United Nations", which was located on the guided tour route at United Nations Headquarters. Another exhibit, "The Palestinians — 60 Years of Struggle and Enduring Hope", displayed at Headquarters in November and December 2008, portrayed Palestinian life through the use of powerful photographic images. The photos were taken as part of a project aimed at empowering young Palestinian photographers through training in photography and film-making.

17. In addition, the Public Inquiries Unit of the Department distributed more than 1,000 copies of the pamphlet "The Question of Palestine and the United Nations" to visitors in the six official languages.

18. The travelling version of "The Question of Palestine and the United Nations" exhibit, which addressed the issue of human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, was produced in Arabic, English and Spanish. The Spanish version was exhibited at the United Nations Latin American and Caribbean Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace and at the United Nations Public Forum in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace, both held in Santiago, from 11 to 13 December 2008.

19. The publication, *The United Nations Today*, available in English, French and Spanish, included a review of United Nations action in the Middle East, including participation in the ongoing peace process, humanitarian assistance to Palestinian refugees, advocacy for the needs of the Palestinian people and support for their human rights.